

## CLAIMS

1. A positive resist composition that is used in a resist pattern formation method comprising a step, within a lithography process, for substituting a liquid remaining on a substrate following alkali developing with a critical drying liquid, and then drying said critical drying liquid by causing passage through a critical state, wherein said positive resist composition comprises a resin component (A), which has an alkali-soluble unit content of less than 20 mol%, contains an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group, and displays increased alkali solubility under action of acid, an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, and an organic solvent (C) for dissolving said components (A) and (B), and said component (A) comprises a structural unit (a1) containing an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group, a structural unit (a2) containing a lactone unit, and a structural unit (a3) containing a polycyclic group with an alcoholic hydroxyl group.
2. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said alkali-soluble unit is at least one unit selected from a group consisting of structural units containing a phenolic hydroxyl group, and structural units containing a carboxyl group.
3. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein quantities of said structural units (a1) to (a3) within said component (A) are from 20 to 60 mol% for said (a1), from 20 to 60 mol% for said (a2), and from 5 to 50 mol% for said (a3), and said alkali-soluble unit content is zero.

4. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said component (A) further comprises a structural unit (a4) containing a polycyclic group that differs from said acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group, said lactone unit, and said polycyclic group with an alcoholic hydroxyl group.

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5. A positive resist composition according to claim 4, wherein quantities of said structural units (a1) to (a4) within said component (A) are from 20 to 60 mol% for said (a1), from 20 to 60 mol% for said (a2), from 5 to 50 mol% for said (a3), and from 1 to 30 mol% for said (a4), and said alkali-soluble unit content is zero.

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6. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said component (B) is an onium salt with a fluorinated alkylsulfonate ion as an anion.

7. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, further comprising a secondary or tertiary lower aliphatic amine (D) in a quantity within a range from 0.01 to 2.0% by weight relative to said component (A).

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